

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

HUMAN-ANIMAL CONFLICT INCIDENTS IN CHAMA, KASENENGWA AND ITEZHI-TEZHI

Madam Speaker, I am grateful for the privilege to stand before the House to deliver a ministerial statement on the recent human-animal conflict incidents that occurred in Chama, Kasenengwa, Itezhi-tezhi, and other parts of the country. Let me, from the outset, state that the loss of human life and property caused by human-wildlife incidents is not only sad but also, indeed, regrettable. The Government would like to take this opportunity to convey its sincere condolences to the families of the deceased.

Madam Speaker, my statement will cover information on the incidents that occurred in Chama, Kasenengwa and Itezhi-tezhi and then, give a general impression of human-animal incidents in other parts of the country. I will conclude my statement by highlighting the measures that have been put in place to mitigate human-animal conflict.

Chama District

Madam Speaker, the Department of National Parks and Wildlife (DNPW), popularly known as Zambia Wildlife Authority (ZAWA), received a report through the Tembwe Community Resource Board on 18th September, 2022, at 1100 hours. The report indicated that a male person by the name of Lafi Zimba; aged seventy-five, of Chizikiza Village, Chief Tembwe, Chama District, who was coming from fishing on the Luangwa River, was found dead in the bush in Mulondola area, away from the villages on Saturday, 17th September, 2022, by members of the community. Officers from the DNPW, the Zambia Police and members of the community rushed to the scene and collected the body and took it to Chama District Hospital mortuary. The deceased was put to rest in his home village. Officers from the department are on the ground monitoring the situation. It is suspected that the victim was trampled by an elephant that was not found at the scene.

Kasenengwa District

Madam Speaker, the DNPW received the last report on human-wildlife conflict from Kasenengwa in June 2022. The incident involved a buffalo that was posing a threat to human life, which was attended to by the DNPW, Chipata Office. The department is not in receipt of any other incident on the same.

Itezhi-tezhi District

Madam Speaker, a report was received from the community members that a male person, Francis Mulilo, aged fifty-seven of Chief Kaingu, was heard crying for help by two women, who were going to draw water from the Kafue River on 16th September, 2022, around 1600 hours. Rescuers found him lying in a pool of blood and it was suspected that he could have been attacked by a hippo. The victim was rushed to Itezhi-tezhi Hospital, and later evacuated to the University Teaching Hospital (UTH) for further medical attention.

General Perspective of Human-Wildlife Conflict in Other Parts of the Country

Madam Speaker, the human-wildlife conflict situation in Zambia has become a matter of great concern lately and seems to be on the increase in comparison to the situation in the previous years. From January 2022 to date, the Ministry of Tourism, through the DNPW, has received a total of 6,068 reports of problem animals, ranging from injury and loss of human lives to destruction of property and food and, in some instances, killing of livestock. The problem of human-wildlife conflict is common in all provinces in Zambia, but prevalent in Muchinga, the Southern, the Western, Lusaka, Central, the Eastern and Luapula provinces. The increase in human-wildlife conflict, which is currently being experienced, is largely attributed to the expansion of human settlements in protected areas through encroachment, blockage of wildlife corridors, introduction of livestock in game management areas (GMAs) and an increase in wildlife in some protected areas.

Madam Speaker, the bad practices, such as timber logging, charcoal burning and unsustainable land use in GMAs, are affecting foliage, which is food for wildlife, especially elephants. As such, elephants are forced to wander into nearby villages in search of food and in the process, cause human-wildlife conflicts. Therefore, the long-term solution is to educate our people, as we introduce the programme for alternative livelihoods in the affected communities.

Madam Speaker, in addition, where logging is permitted, the Government will ensure that it is done in a manner that does not adversely affect the eco system, forest foliage and trees, which animals will survive on.

Madam Speaker, for other species such as lions and leopards, which could be wondering around trying to find safe haven away from the dominant male species, our officers from the DNPW will continue to monitor reported incidents so as to avert any loss of human life and damage to property.

Madam Speaker, to put things in perspective, out of the 6,068 reports received, a total of 5,600 reports were attended to. Some of the reports were not attended to due to the delay in the reporting by complainants, inadequate manpower and transport. However, the DNPW has deployed officers on the ground, including community scouts, to attend to the recent reports received from Chama, Kasenengwa, Itezhi-tezhi, Luangwa and Isoka districts.

Madam Speaker, regrettably, fifty-nine people have been killed by problem animals countrywide, especially by elephants, hippos and crocodiles, whilst the number of people injured by the problem animals still stands at eighteen. The number of livestock killed/caught by problem animals stands at eighty-three. Eighty-six problem animals have since been controlled in the first and second quarters of 2022.

Madam Speaker, the DNPW has employed various human-wildlife conflict interventions or mitigation measures to include sensitisation of communities living in wildlife areas, such as fencing off fields, scaring away of animals and, in extreme cases, resorted to controlling or killing animals responsible for causing the injury or loss of human life.

Madam Speaker, human-wildlife conflict remains one of the most challenging conservation issues not only in Zambia, but across the sub-region. The Ministry of Tourism will be exploring long-term measures aimed at reducing incidents or mitigating conflicts which include, but not limited to the following:

- (a) improving law enforcement and wildlife habitat protection. In this regard, my ministry is actively engaging the Civil Service Commission (CSC) so as to expedite the recruitment and the deployment of 340 wildlife police officers. The Ministry of Finance and National Planning has already granted Treasury Authority to employ the wildlife police officers;
- (b) improving community-based wildlife management across the country. In this respect, my ministry advertised to engage honorary wildlife police officers from members of the general public, including hon. Members of Parliament in constituencies, in GMAs. All this is an effort to effectively involve communities, including hon. Members of Parliament, in the management of human-wildlife conflicts across the country. So far, ninety-one applications have been received. We are yet to determine the number of hon. Members of Parliament who have applied to be honorary wildlife police officers;
- (c) strengthening planning and developing implementation general management plans and tourism development area plans. This will ensure that human activity in protected areas is undertaken in a manner which mitigates human-wildlife conflicts;
- (d) improving the policy and legislative landscape to provide the necessary anchor for sustainable wildlife management.

Madam Speaker, further, at the strategic level, the Government has continued to promote consistency in the development and implementation of General Management Plans (GMPs). The GMPs, as we would like to call them, set forth basic management and development philosophy

for the protected areas and provides land use strategies for addressing problems to achieving identified management objects over a set period of time. This is key to preventing trespassing and encroachment of all kinds.

Madam Speaker, in order for us to have active early warning systems, the Government has continued to conduct regular monitoring of animal population and movement, coupled with early notification of communities and control to ensure animal densities stay within their recommended stocking rates. For effectiveness, the use of Global Position System (GPS) satellite callers and area surveillance for animal tracking will need to be scaled-up.

Madam Speaker, before I conclude, I would like to bring to your attention that there are a number of GMAs dealing in carbon trading across the country. These include Rufunsa GMA, in Rufunsa District; West Petauke GMA, in Nyimba and Petauke districts; Sandwe GMA, in Musanzala and Petauke districts; Lupande GMA, in Mambwe District; and Lumimba GMA, in Lumezi District.

Madam Speaker, substantial revenues are being realised from carbon trading in these particular areas, hence it is the ministry's view that such revenues be channelled towards mitigating human-wildlife conflict, including resettling affected communities so as to enable them engage in alternative livelihoods.

Madam, we are confident that the implementation of these integrated approaches to combat human-wildlife conflict will go a long way in preserving the lives and safeguarding crops and domestic animals. These measures will result in a peaceful co-existence of human and wildlife in one place.

Madam Speaker, the DNPW remains indefatigable in ensuring that human-wildlife conflict incidents are kept to the barest minimum.

I thank you, Madam Speaker.